

**Labor and Public Employees Committee**

**February 15, 2007**

**Raised Bill No. 7034:**

**An Act Concerning Collective Bargaining Rights For In-Home State Subsidized Day Care Providers**

Members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee:

My name is Nilsa Ramirez and I am a family child care provider in New Haven, Connecticut. I have been taking care of kids for 15 years, first as a license-exempt provider and, for the last 8 years as a licensed provider.

Some people don't realize that family daycare providers are educators, but we are. I am much more than a babysitter. We know that early education begins at home. We teach the children we care for good manners and how to share, for example. We also teach the children how to recognize colors and basic counting skills so that they are better prepared when they arrive at school for the first time. We provide the kids with nutritious meals and snacks in a homelike setting.

I love working with kids but it is not easy. The reimbursement rates are low and we do not have health insurance as a group. Many times we have to wait weeks, even months for parents to get approved for the subsidy and the process is frustrating. We all know of good providers who have given up and are looking for other work. Recently I learned of another excellent provider who had to close her daycare because she wasn't getting enough help from the state. It saddens me because I know she was an excellent child educator. The service needs to be improved and providers need to have a real voice in the decision-making.

I am excited about the work that SEIU is doing to bring improvements for child care providers and the families that depend on us – that's why I am working with other providers in Connecticut's family child care union, SEIU Local 2001.

Granting us the freedom to bargain collectively is the best way to ensure that the voices of providers are heard and that childcare standards are improved in the State of Connecticut.

I urge you to support Raised Bill Number 7034, AN ACT CONCERNING COLLECTIVE BARGAINING RIGHTS FOR IN-HOME STATE SUBSIDIZED DAY CARE PROVIDERS.

Nilsa Ramirez  
288 Poplar Street  
New Haven, CT 06513  
(203) 777-3835